



Klamath Alliance for Resources & Environment

August 17, 2000

Mr. Steve Ritchie, Acting Executive Director
Cal-Fed Bay-Delta Program
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1155
Sacramento, CA 95814

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CALFED Bay-Delta Program

Dear Mr. Ritchie:

The Klamath Alliance for Resources & Environment is an organization dedicated to common sense environmental management. We believe our land, water and air environmental issues can be decided, in environmentally positive ways, without denying the needs of people. We are very concerned that the Cal-Fed program not affect the ranchers and farmers of California. The proposal to convert millions of acres from farmland to habitat and other environmental uses, is of great concern to our members. A very thorough look must be taken before any such land conversions are made. We cannot afford to lose the farms and ranches that supply food to California and the world, because of poor environmental science or lack of environmental impact studies.

KARE believes the deadline of August 21, 2000 is simply not enough time to review the massive amount of information and then comment adequately. We request that the deadline for comments be extended for a considerable amount of time. Those who will be so dramatically affected, farmers and ranchers, are in their busy season, and they must have adequate time to look at this program and respond effectively.

Too often we have seen environmental concerns lead to precipitous decisions, which are later to be proven false, often leading to harm that cannot be undone. For instance, about 10 years ago a Refuge was set aside near Sacramento and cattle that had been grazing there were removed because they would be detrimental to the goals and objectives of the Refuge. Today, cattle are being returned because experience and further scientific study has shown that the cattle were an environmental positive. While this is fine for the ranchers who are being allowed to graze there now, what about the ranchers who lost their grazing land, and perhaps were put out of business because of the hurry to make an environmental decision, without making certain it was correct? We cannot make environmental decisions that are based on politics, or hypotheses. They must be grounded in accurate science and made after much study.

Over and over we have seen how wildlife happily and fruitfully cohabit farm lands with farmers and ranchers. We believe the Cal-Fed program must make absolutely certain that their decisions do not upset this balance. And, again and again we have seen the poor stewardship record of the government, and seen how it does not equate to the positive stewardship of a private owner.

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Ranchers and farmers need to be allowed to continue their operations when they provide adequate and positive environmental conditions for wild species. 75% of the wildlife in California exists on private land. That is a telling statistic when you look at the amount of government owned land, and the millions and millions of dollars that have been spent supposedly to create habitat on those government lands.

The people of California stepped forward positively when the first indication of future water shortages was announced. The conservation plans put in place have had a positive effect. However, this type of program has a finite base, and we believe that conservation programs cannot be expected to continue to expand to meet expected needs. It is time to address other ideas, and to not put all our eggs into one basket. We need surface water storage and we need it on line as soon as possible. If we do not address water problems for farmers and ranchers today, then future draughts will be very disruptive. America produces the safest and most economical food in the world, and we do not want to become a food exporter, simply because we have failed to address important water concerns in a positive manner.

KARE asks why Cal-Fed says that the loss of a quarter of a million acres of California farmland is "unavoidable"? There is no excuse for making such a draconian decision without taking an exceptional amount of time looking for other alternatives.

KARE believes the changes that occurred when the framework agreement was signed in June, make it imperative that more time be spent evaluating this new environmental report. The public must be brought into the process in a legitimate manner, and their needs must be discussed, evaluated, and addressed. Unless and until this happens, KARE believes the current Cal-Fed program is a faulty document, and should not go forward.

Very truly yours,



Nancy J. Ingalsbee
Executive Director

Cc: Governor Gray Davis, Senator Dianne Feinstein, Senator Barbara Boxer, Congressman Wally Herger, California Senator Maurice Johannessen, Assemblyman Dick Dickerson and the Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors